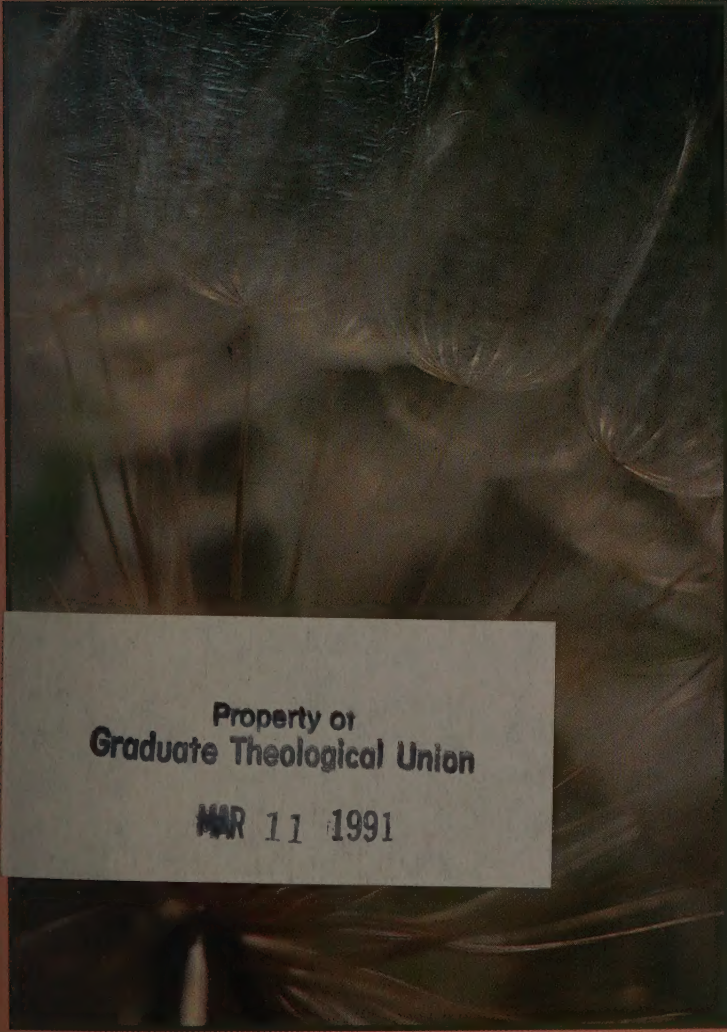


# LUTHERAN WOMAN TODAY

APRIL  
1991



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## Evangelism and Witness

*For Growth in Faith and Mission*

## Cover meditation ♦♦

*"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).*

**T**his is the command I have inherited. But how am I to make disciples? Who am I that anyone should listen?

Like the dandelion, I am plain and common. Were I to speak freely of God to my co-workers and neighbors, my words might be considered as undesirable as a rank growth of troublesome weeds.

Yet, Christ commands me to go forth planting seeds of God's truth and love—even in inhospitable land, even if I encounter arrogance or exclusivism, even if I am misunderstood.

It helps me to remember that God's servants are often lowly. Moses, Gideon and Jeremiah all claimed to lack talent. The first disciples were not drawn from the educated or upper classes; yet they confronted the power of evil and summoned people to conversion.

Like dandelions, Christ's first disciples were often considered undesir-

able, troublesome. Like dandelions they were tenacious. They clung to their trust in God as ardently as the roots of hardy weeds cling to small pockets of soil among the rocks.

When the disciples told of Christ they must have had a glow about them—a flush of radiance like the many-rayed, brilliant yellow bloom of dandelions. They had startling things to say and people listened. And when the time was ripe, the seeds of their preaching—borne by the stirring of the Holy Spirit to the hearts of their listeners—took root, bloom and multiply again.

**L**ike the dandelion, I am plain and common; yet the Son of God, who came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many, commands me to make disciples of all nations. As an individual and together with the whole body of Christ, I must go forth totally dependent on God, telling of Christ, serving the powerless and trusting the Holy Spirit to carry, root and nurture these seeds of good news.

*Sanda Horvath  
Palatine, Illinois*

**ON THE COVER:** "Dandelions" photographed by Michael H. Lilja

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# A Christmas Devotion for All Seasons

Janice Hughes

Tuesday, our son Gary's plane left Texas  
Saudi Arabia, where he'll spend Christmas.  
That evening, Rick, our oldest son, called to  
say that in one to three weeks he'll be deployed,  
leaving a wife and small baby behind.

We know we aren't the only family  
this has happened to, nor will we be  
the last. But as parents it is very dis-  
concerting. Out of love, we bring our  
children into the world. We rear  
them in love, and teach them to love  
God, home, family, country, and oth-  
ers. Then something happens over  
which we have little control, and we  
send them off not knowing what  
might happen to them.

All at once this scripture verse  
came to mind: "For God so loved the  
world that he gave his only son"  
(John 3:16). We remember especially  
Christmas that God's love meant  
coming to us as a human baby—with  
human feelings, desires and needs—  
knowing that this tiny baby would  
grow to be a man and be killed in a  
humiliating and degrading way.  
And Jesus, out of love for us, ful-  
filled God's promise by dying on the  
cross—but not without showing his  
humanness by questioning why:  
"Let this cup pass from me; yet not  
what I want but what you want"  
(Matthew 26:39).

At Christmas, we sing, "Peace on  
earth, good will to all." That's good

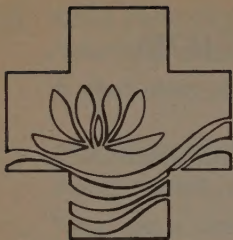
will not only to Americans, British,  
or Germans, but to Israelis and Ira-  
quis as well. And "joy to the world" is  
not just to the United States, but to  
El Salvador, Kuwait and Iran.

If we want peace on earth and joy  
to the world, we have to continue the  
mission that Christ gave his disci-  
ples: "Go into all the world preach-  
ing, teaching and baptizing in the  
name of the Father, Son and Holy  
Spirit." Let us fight not for greed or  
apathy or power, but for the souls of  
men and women and for their free-  
dom.

Let us pray: *Dear God, at this joy-  
ous season of the year, as we celebrate  
the birth of your son, sent to us out of  
your love for us, may we as your sons  
and daughters do all we can to  
spread the good news of your peace,  
joy and love throughout the world.  
Let our faith be strengthened that we  
can pray, as Christ did, not our will  
but yours be done. Amen.* ■

Janice Hughes presented a version  
of this devotion at a church council  
meeting at Zion Lutheran Church in  
Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania.





What difference does it  
make that there is a

# WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION

Judy Springer

"We're organizing an evening circle at Westwood, especially for younger and working women—and we'd like you to be a part of it. We're going to meet next Tuesday evening at the church. Can you come?"

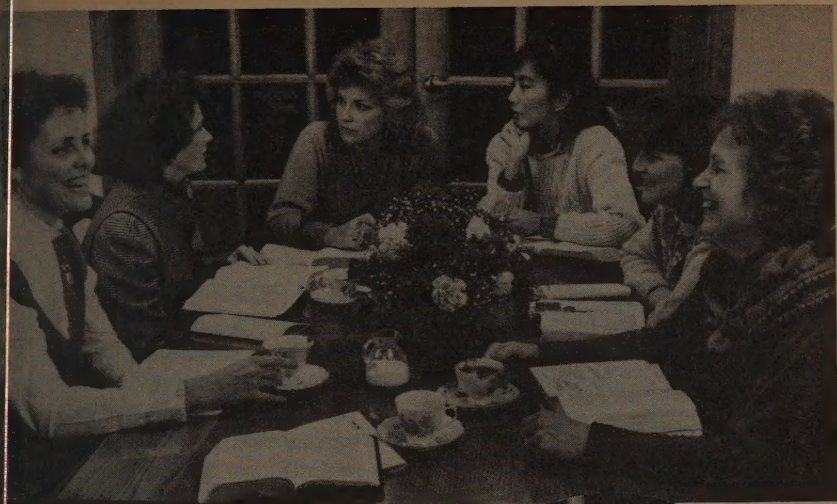
The invitation caught me by surprise. I was, after all, only a few years out of high school; being a part of the women's organization had never crossed my mind. I didn't even know what the women's organization did. Nor did I know the young woman who was inviting me, other than that her name was Pat and that she was married to someone I remembered from Sunday church school some years back.

I wondered why she was asking me, if she even knew who I was, and whether she was aware of the situation in which I was living. The hesitancy I was feeling must have been apparent, for she added, "We'd really like to have you, Judy. And it's okay to bring your little ones with you. Several of us will probably bring our children, too."

As I went home from worship that day, my mind was full of conflict. Just my going to church on Sunday mornings sometimes set off explosions at home. Suggesting that I leave the house for an evening might bring on another of those tirades I dreaded so much and might even jeopardize that one outlet in life that was still mine—Sunday morning worship.

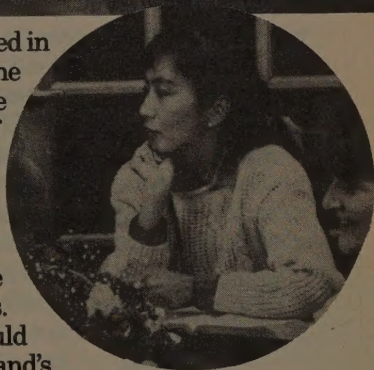
As I worried about these things, I wondered what being a part of the women's organization might involve. A certain amount





of anonymity could be maintained in Sunday morning worship, but the intimacy of a circle might be more revealing. I wondered if the women forming the circle would really accept a person who made clothes out of her sister-in-law's discarded curtains and who added cuffs to the children's hand-me-down pants.

I wondered what they would think if they knew of my husband's infidelities, of his verbal and sometimes even physical abuse of the family, of the uppers and downers and guns hidden in his closet. What would they think if they knew that our bills often went unpaid? As I considered the possible consequences of accepting Pat's invitation, my head buzzed with confusion and my vision blurred with tears.



For the next two days I struggled with whether or not to mention the invitation to my husband, but finally I did. The wonder of it for me yet today is that I was able to go to that first meeting of the new circle and subsequent meetings—children in tow, to be sure—without major conflict at home. How I thank God for those opportunities: for Pat's willingness to be a vessel through whom God worked, and for that circle of laughing, loving, accepting, and encouraging children of God who helped in so many ways to bring healing and wholeness to my life. To this day—28 years later—these women remain dear friends, even though we are now scattered over several states.

Thus began my association with the women's organization of the church. Throughout the years, in whatever place I have lived, this caring community has offered me affirmation and support: both during the painful times (as when



divorce eventually came) and during the joyful times. One of those joyful times came when I was selected to represent the women's organization in a cultural exchange program in Africa. Later, when I reported on the program to a congregational unit, I met the precious man who has been my husband now for almost five years!

**W**HAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE THAT THERE IS A WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION?

**It makes a difference because my world has been made better because of it.** My story is not unique. During my term as a churchwide board member for Women of the ELCA, I heard, over and over again, stories of the love, acceptance, affirmation, encouragement, and growth which have come to innumerable women because of their contact with the women's organization.

**W**HAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE THAT THERE IS A WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION?

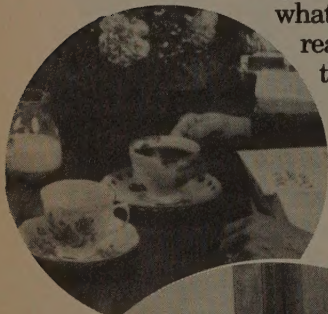
**It makes a difference because *their* world has been made better because of it.** Because so many of us know what the organization means in our lives and recognize what it can mean in other peoples' lives, the reaching out continues—both collectively as the organization and individually as participants.

As an organization, we can and do achieve tremendous things. Sometimes these bigger efforts catch our attention, because we can count the total dollars or number of persons involved. Look,

for instance, at such broad programs as One in Christ, Woman to Woman, and the Campaign in Support of Women in Namibia.

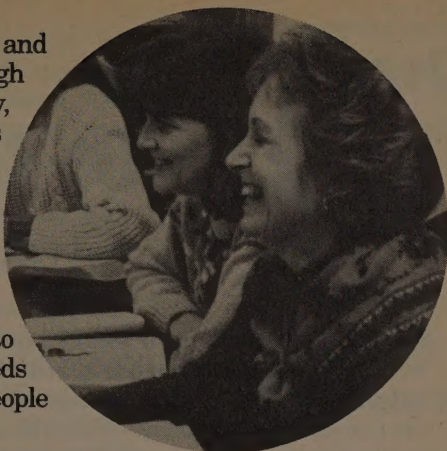
Also, witness the Women of the ELCA support for projects that benefit women and children living in poverty, environmental efforts, involvement with the Ecumenical

Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women, affirmative action, literacy, peace with justice, grants and scholarships, evangelism.





As we support these and other programs through time, talents and money, we know that thousands of lives are touched, both inside and outside the organization. We recognize as well that each person affected by these programs multiplies the good work so that the lives of hundreds of thousands of other people are touched, too.



**WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE THAT THERE IS A WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION?**

**It makes a difference because the whole world is made better because of it.** The total programming of Women of the ELCA—that is, what we do collectively—is, indeed, impressive and effective. And the quality and relevance of our materials and events are important to all of us. Still it is the unique contribution of each individual that remains at the heart of this organization. For it is the participant, moving in the power of the Holy Spirit, who invariably issues that first invitation to come into the organization, who opens her arms in welcome, and who lives out the purpose of the organization so people like myself can know the power of God's love and acceptance.

To each and every "Pat" of our organization, I and thousands of others are forever grateful.

**WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE THAT THERE IS A WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION?**

**It makes a world of difference. ■**

*Judy Springer served on the first churchwide board of Women of the ELCA. She is married to the Rev. Charles Springer, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Dayton, Ohio. She is a senior at Wright State University majoring in religious studies.*



The

E

in the ELCA

Nancy L. Knutsen

If you were to approach people on the street and ask them what comes to mind when they hear the word *evangelical*, you would likely get a variety of responses: "People on TV who are always asking for money." "Folks who stand on street corners or in airports and hand out tracts." "Churches that are outreach-oriented." "Fundamentalist, right-wing or charismatic churches." "People who tell you what you'd better believe."

Obviously, the word *evangelical* has an image problem in our society. The definitions are conflicting and confusing. Many people define the term negatively, or at least far too narrowly. So why did we, in forming a new Lutheran church, consciously choose to become the *Evangelical*? Lutheran Church in America, making *Evangelical* the "first name" of our church?

Given the situation, there were really two options. First, we could have dropped the word *evangelical* altogether. Since the

term brings up so many different images for people (many of them negative), we could simply have declared the word bankrupt and gone in search of a clearer term. The second option was to make an intentional effort to reclaim a word that is an important part of our biblical and confessional heritage, and to fill it with the meaning we know that it holds. We chose the latter course.

Both *evangelical* and *evangelism* are rooted in the Greek word for "good news" found in the New Testament. And "good news" is precisely what we mean when we use those words. We are saying that the gospel has the power to free us as it offers a much-needed word of acceptance, forgiveness and hope. The gospel reminds us that evangelism is not telling us what we have to do for God, but about what has already been done for us by God in Christ. All good news! All grace! To be *evangelical* is to believe that the gospel is something that people really want and need to hear. It is as simple and as profound as that.

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**The word  
*evangelical* has  
an image problem  
in our society.**

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What does all this mean for us? We are three years into the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and there are still many who are uncomfortable with the word *evangelical* and confused about its meaning. In order to reclaim the word, we need to take some intentional steps. Here are some suggestions:

**Use it.** People who have negative or narrow understandings of the word probably haven't heard it used in more positive, grace-filled and wholistic ways. Fearing the word *evangelical* will not change people's perceptions of it, but hearing it used in different ways will. Encourage your pastor and other church leaders to use the word whenever possible, making sure that its true meaning can be understood from the context.

**Teach it.** Reclaiming this word also requires that a new generation learn it as a basic part of their Christian education. One congregation devoted an entire teacher-training session to how they could help children grow up understanding *evangelical* primarily as good news. Adults also need to be educated in this area. Forums and discussion groups that look at the biblical and historical meanings of the word, and the nature and purpose of evangelism today, can do much to sweep away misconceptions and promote better understandings of our ministry and mission.

**Explore it.** Encourage all groups, committees and organizations—not just the evangelism committee—to take a look at the “evangelical dimension” of their work. Such a look can be helpful in broadening our vision and promoting a more wholistic and comprehensive understanding of the word. Find ways for continued prayer, study and conversation.

**Live it.** An evangelical church is one that is compelled to move the good news outside of itself. When we grasp that evangelism is not about guilt, fear, manipulation or money . . . and when we believe that the gospel gives life, then we can move forward with hope and conviction. Being evangelical in the ELCA can be an exciting adventure in faith. God will go with us as we live out this calling! ■

*Nancy L. Knutsen, St. Paul, Minnesota, serves on the witness/evangelism staff of the ELCA Division for Congregational Life, deployed in Region 3 (Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota). She is a member of University Lutheran Church of Hope in Minneapolis.*



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**Both evangelical  
and evangelism  
are rooted in the  
Greek word for  
“good news”  
found in the  
New Testament.**

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# LISTEN FIRST

Inez M. Schwarzkopf

I'm learning a lot lately from listening to college admissions counselors. They meet often with prospective students to talk about whether a particular college is the right choice for them.

The counselors tell me that it can be much more important to listen than to talk. As students tell them about their lives and what they want in a college, the counselors are better able to explain how their colleges fit the students.

If listening is that important in helping someone decide where to spend four years, think of what an impact it can have on how people spend all of this life and the next!

As Christians, we are called to witness to the gospel of Christ. Most of us are called to witness personally, face-to-face, with people we meet in the ordinary courses of our lives. And until I know someone well enough that she will trust me with her ideas, her experience and her feelings, it is unlikely that she will trust me enough to believe and act on my witness.

The way we get to know other people is through listening. Active listening.

This doesn't come easily or naturally. Listening actively to other peo-

ple is not unlike listening to a symphony, or listening through a stethoscope for heart sounds.

Learning to listen is hard work. We are tempted to respond in ways we've learned to respond, to say what we think we're supposed to say. To be sure, much of our everyday conversation is routine and automatic. Someone who asks, "How are you?" in greeting doesn't really want me to answer with a list of my aches.

But a mother who asks, "What can I say to my rebellious teenager?" probably doesn't need pat answers as much as she needs to talk through her own fears and anger.

Active listening isn't just keeping still and letting the other person run on. It involves paying attention, making eye contact, and responding as appropriate. When something the other person has said isn't clear, an active listener asks for clarification.

Active listening is open, nonjudgmental. It is not a debate in which

**It can be much more  
important to listen  
than to talk.**





An active listener pays attention to what is *not* being said as well as to what is spoken.



listen carefully to what the other person is saying so that we can correct their errors.

It can be disturbing and even frightening to hear people tell me things that I believe to be wrong or false. But if I haven't built a relationship of trust and respect with the speaker, correcting her may only drive her away from me. I then will never have a chance to tell her the more important news: that Jesus gives . . . and loves.

An active listener tries to learn about the other's feelings and experiences as well as her thoughts and ideas. She respects and affirms the intimacy and authenticity of the other person's life and emotions.

When my daughters tell me what is like for them to be young and female in the 1990s, I have no right to say they are mistaken. I am female and living in the '90s, but no longer young. So what I experience is not the same as what they experience.

When people of color or other cultures tell me about their lives, and how they interpret them, I must respect that as well. They are the best witnesses to their own lives.

An active listener pays attention to what is *not* being said as well as to what is spoken. Omissions, hesitations, emotional reactions and body language can say as much as words.

We are not accustomed to pauses and silence. In radio, periods of si-

lence are called "dead air." But a good listener learns to let quiet happen in conversation. When she waits quietly, the speaker finds the words and the heart to say more.

An active listener prays. As she listens, she asks the Spirit to help her hear what she needs to learn about and from the speaker.

Of course, witness eventually involves speaking. And when the time is right, we Christians must be willing and eager to say the name of Jesus and tell the good news. One word at the right time can be more effective than a dozen sermons.

At that time, the Spirit will give us the right words, if we are prepared. We prepare by knowing the word of God well enough to tell what God promises. We also prepare by first having a personal relationship with Christ, so that the words we say will ring true from our own experience. And we prepare by knowing the hearer so well that the word we speak is the one she needs. ■

*Inez Schwarzkopf, Minneapolis, Minnesota, is communications director for an association of Minnesota colleges. She has also written "Gifted . . . to Listen: An Evangelism Tool," a one- or two-day retreat on listening and evangelism. See Women of the ELCA, page 44.*

# Be Fruitful and Proclaim

Valora Starr

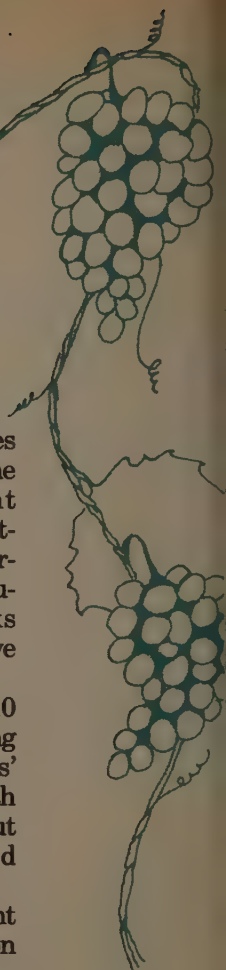
God's words to the male and female created in the image of God were to "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. . . ." These instructions to the people of Israel tell that Yahweh is pleased and given praise by multiplying God's creation. The will and blessings of Yahweh were shared generation to generation through the bloodline of a chosen people. The chosen responded by retelling each generation what God had done for them through the covenant.

With the coming of Jesus—who was both of the lineage of David and identified by the Holy Spirit as our Savior—came a change. Now the people of God must do more than "be fruitful and multiply," passing God's blessings from generation to generation. With the coming of Jesus, the people of God must be fruitful and *proclaim*: becoming instruments for sharing the good news to a world in need of salvation.

The church today faces the same realities that the early New Testament church faced. Finding itself in the midst of diversity and a quest for inclusivity, the church asks itself, "With whom do we share the good news?"

Read Acts chapters 10 and 11. Here is an exciting account of the apostles' struggle to answer "With whom?" as they set about proclaiming the good news.

Peter becomes obedient to the great commission through a vision (Acts 10:9-15). Acts 10:47 continues, "Then Peter declared, 'Can any one forbid water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?' " (Revised Standard Version). Peter justified baptizing Gentiles to fellow apostles by saying, "If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?" (Acts 11:17).



*Growing in our personal faith is only half of our call to share the good news; we must be willing to bring others to Christ.*



There is a joy that comes from proclaiming the good news. The word of God changes and transforms the life of the proclaimer as well as the hearer. We may experience rejection or a lack of openness to the good news, but it is special to us. Yet all we need do, through faith, is to share with others what God has done for us. And we must trust that the Holy Spirit is with us and will complete what we have started.

The Acts story in chapters 11 and 12 gives an account of the Holy Spirit's work: "and a great number that believed turned to the Lord" (Acts 11:21). The story also reveals the apostles' many obstacles. We need to be reminded that we face similar challenges. And, as the apostles, we must continue to share the gift of Christ in our lives. The command to us is to simply, "Go and tell."

The apostles had each other and the Holy Spirit for encouragement and support. Just as Peter challenged his fellow apostles, Women of the ELCA can best carry out its mission and ministry when each woman is prepared, encouraged and supported to faithfully share the message of Jesus Christ in her particular place.

Becoming women who freely share the good news happens as we grow in faith through prayer, studying God's word, and

practice. The Bible is our "text" book, filled with God's instructions to us and encouragement for us.

The Acts account of the apostles not only points to the struggle and determination of the faithful, but also to the joy they experienced and the praises given to God. In Acts we can find a model for our own growth as witnesses to the good news in our lives. Growing in our personal faith is only half of our call to share the good news; we must be willing to bring others to Christ.

It takes time, training, and practice to grow strong witnesses. In Acts 11:26 we learn that Paul and Barnabas met for a whole year with the church in Antioch, teaching a large company of people; and it was there "that the disciples were first called 'Christians'" (New Revised Standard Version).

Be fruitful and proclaim! God calls us to respond to all the brokenness in our world: war, drugs, broken relationships, homelessness, abuse. The more we tell the story the better we become as proclaimers, and the world will continue to say, "and a great number that believed turned to the Lord," and they were called Christians. ■

*Valora Starr is director for evangelism and witness for Women of the ELCA.*

*With the coming of Jesus, the people of God must be fruitful and proclaim: becoming instruments for sharing the good news to a world in need of salvation.*



# Go and Tell the Nations!

Mary C. Carlson

On every continent, our partner churches are engaged in evangelism. Are the issues our brothers and sisters face similar to those we face in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America? What are the particular circumstances that foster and challenge evangelism around the globe?

In seeking answers to these questions, we travel first to Madagascar, an island nation located off the southern end of the African continent, where the Malagasy Lutheran Church uses 154 evangelists in its outreach program. For three years, these evangelists attend church-run Bible schools, where they receive biblical and practical training for work in the parish. The church selects students who show a particular strength for preaching and teaching and sends them into new areas of Madagascar to establish congregations.

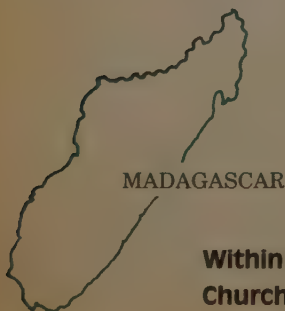
Evangelism campaigns have been extremely successful in the Malagasy Lutheran church. Two or three people enter a new area of the country, share the good news of Jesus

Christ and ask people to make a commitment to their faith. Interested people attend catechism classes and are later baptized. One of the initial visitors stays in the area and helps establish a congregation. Within the last three years, the Malagasy Lutheran Church has baptized over 10,000 new members.

In Cameroon and the Central African Republic, women's organizations of Lutheran churches play a vital role in evangelism. They are continually inviting more women to join their groups and share their Bible studies.

When we turn our attention to Latin America, we find partner churches that are also strongly committed to evangelism. About five years ago, the Lutheran Church of Argentina sent the first Argentine mission developer to the coastal city of Comodoro Rivadavia, where the congregation of St. John the Baptist was started.

In Peru, evangelism efforts over the last 20 years have borne a new Lutheran church consisting of three congregations and led entirely by Peruvians. [See "About Women," page 18.] Through a wholistic approach in the neighborhoods of Lima, including soup kitchens and popular radio and street dramas that depict social situations, Lutherans in Peru have



**Within the last three years, the Malagasy Lutheran Church has baptized over 10,000 new members.**



There is now a Lutheran church in  
 consisting of three congregations  
 led entirely by Peruvians.

shed out and established new  
 churches.

Across the Atlantic, the Lutheran  
 Church of Great Britain sponsors  
 weekly noon preaching and music  
 services at St. Ann's Lutheran  
 Church in London. Passersby in this  
 Mill-Street-like location stop in to  
 their lunch and hear the musical  
 reach.

In the Baltic region of Estonia,  
 music also acted as an integral part  
 of evangelism during the many years  
 of religious repression. Churches be-

came evangelism charge. They are to see  
 that the grandchildren are baptized  
 and reared in the Christian faith. In  
 reality it has been the grandmoth-  
 ers—the babushkas—who have  
 passed on the faith, particularly  
 within the most recent generations.

Finally, we travel to Asia, to  
 glimpse some examples of evangel-  
 istic efforts there.

**In London, the Lutheran Church of Great Britain  
 sponsors weekly noon preaching and music services  
 at St. Ann's Lutheran Church.**

GREAT BRITAIN

to break down people's fears by  
 sponsoring concerts. These concerts  
 were well attended and helped peo-  
 ple get used to going into the  
 churches.

Prayer services for peace held at  
 Lutheran churches in Germany pri-  
 or to reunification were definitely  
 evangelistic. Although 90 percent of  
 those attending were non-Christian,  
 preaching, Scripture reading and  
 hymn singing were part of every  
 service.

Within the Russian Orthodox  
 Church, grandparents receive a spe-  
 cial charge that is, in essence, an

in the Baltic region of Estonia, concerts helped  
 people get used to going into the churches.

Christian women in India have for  
 decades provided a critical element  
 in the spread of the gospel and  
 growth of the church. "Bible women,"  
 as they are called there, are able to  
 evangelize in a culture where male  
 evangelists would be too threaten-  
 ing. These women are able to reach  
 out to Hindu women, slowly and ef-  
 fectively. The process takes time and  
 patience but has proved quite suc-  
 cessful.

First a Bible woman will, in a  
 sense, "hang around" outside the

ESTONIA

## Go and Tell the Nations!

In East Malaysia  
the Basel Christian  
Church made a  
conscious decision  
to widen their  
outreach.



The *ashram*  
(community) in  
Guntur, India,  
offers Christian  
fellowship and  
support.

It has been the  
grandmothers,  
the *babushkas*,  
who have passed  
on the faith within  
the Russian  
Orthodox Church.





India, "Bible women" are able to evangelize a culture where male evangelists would be too threatening.



me of the woman she is trying to reach. She will wait, sometimes for a long period of time, for an opportunity to speak or greet the woman of the house. Finally she will be acknowledged and invited inside. In Indian culture, women are often isolated and having another woman to talk to is important.

The Bible woman slowly becomes friend and reaches out to the needs of the other woman; if she is poor or faces adversity, the Bible woman tries to respond. Eventually, many women are converted to Christianity, although some of them are not able to profess their faith openly, particularly if their husband is Hindu.

If you were to attend a worship service in rural India, you might find a group, consisting of mostly women converts, gathered to share word and sacrament. The Bible woman can act as assistant in the worship, depending on the openness of the pastor. Churches often transmit services via loudspeaker so that the "anonymous Christians" have access to worship. Bible women may also share information with converts about Christian radio broadcasts.

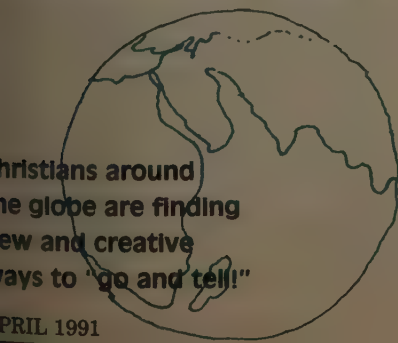
In East Malaysia, the Basel Christian Church (a Lutheran World Federation member church), existed for

decades as an autonomous church of Chinese immigrants that reached out to new Chinese as they arrived in East Malaysia. Fifteen years ago, the church made a conscious decision to widen their outreach to include the native people of the island of Sabah. At first they began working in the interior of the island; later they realized that similar communities existed within the cities where these Chinese Lutherans lived, and they expanded their outreach. These days there are more members of the new communities than of the original church.

Currently, leaders of native Sabah communities are attending training schools to become pastors and evangelists. Their training is wholistic; they study theology and farming so that when they return to their villages, they will be able to offer assistance in both.

In Matthew 28:19, Jesus charged his followers to "go and make disciples of all nations." Today Christians around the globe are finding new and creative ways to "go and tell!" ■

*Mary Carlson is editor of World Encounter, the ELCA's global mission magazine.*



## Ofelia Davila

Rivkah Vaage



**I**t is no surprise that 30-year-old Ofelia Davila was elected first president of the Iglesia Luterana Evangelica Peruana (ILEP) in its constituting convention on February 3, 1990. Davila comes from a family of leaders. As a child she witnessed her father's participation in union activities, first as a miner and then in agriculture. In adolescence she saw her older sister emerge as the leader of a peasant group, a woman leading in the midst of men.

Now, 12 years after becoming a Lutheran, Ofelia is leading the fledgling Lutheran church in Peru.

Ofelia cites a sense of openness and the possibility for fuller participation in leadership as key factors that attracted her to Lutheranism in

the first place. As a youth she participated in both the Catholic and the Lutheran churches in her community. In the end, she chose Lutheranism because she found friendship and equality there.

Ofelia does not stand alone in her position of leadership. The other women in her congregation, and in the other congregations of ILEP, accept her leadership and support it. She is surrounded by women and men committed to the growth of their church. One congregational president said of Ofelia, "She has always stood firm, never deviated from the path."

Her leadership is characterized by shared authority. Decisions are not made unilaterally, but with the full

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*Ofelia cites a sense of openness and the possibility for fuller participation in leadership as key factors that originally attracted her to Lutheranism.*



*The machista culture of Peru has slowed down the emergence of women's leadership. Ofelia believes that Iglesia Luterana Evangelica Peruana is a sign of hope.*

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participation of all members.

Ofelia is always looking to her "base." She talks with others to discover how they see the issues and what they think. She feels a responsibility to her community to bring about what it really needs and wants.

In addition to her (unpaid) duties as the president of the national church, she also serves on her congregation's pastoral team. Iglesia Luterana Evangelica Peruana has no ordained clergy. Instead each congregation is led by lay leaders—men and women—who make up a pastoral team. Since the ILEP congregations are all located in marginal areas of Lima and work with no annual budget, lay pastors are also unpaid.

For Ofelia and the other lay pastors of ILEP, pastoring is a vocation, not a profession. (Ofelia earns her living by working as a secretary.) She earns pastoring skills by doing and by participating in a program that her pastoral team designed and carries out with the help of Evangelical Lutheran Church in America missionaries in Lima.

Living in the midst of an overwhelmingly Catholic context and culture, Ofelia feels that her church has a contribution to make to Peruvian society: "ILEP wants to redeem the best of Peruvian culture and the Catholic church. But as Protestants we have something to say about the excesses of the Catholic church."

Ofelia's strength and balance are even more remarkable in the midst of a society which is *machista* (patriarchal) and which undervalues the contribution of women. When asked if she's a feminist Ofelia says, "Yes, in the respect that I believe that women have a place in society and that we are going to continue to find more room for participation. We are created equal."

Not least among the contributions that ILEP makes to Peruvian culture is providing a context in which a woman like Ofelia can exercise her gifts of leadership. The *machista* culture of Peru has slowed down the emergence of women's leadership. But it has not stopped it. Ofelia is living proof of that. "I believe that it [ILEP] is a sign of hope. Men have always been visible, as the presidents, the ones leading. But this is a step forward. Women have a lot to contribute," she said.

Ofelia is a woman totally committed to her community. Even when she begins to dream about the possibility of someday studying at the university, her goal is always to be able to prepare herself to better serve her community. It is no wonder that her community is thriving under her leadership. ■

*Rivkah Vaage is an ELCA missionary in Lima, Peru.*

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*Ofelia is a woman totally committed to her community.*

# 18<sup>+</sup> Ways to Be an Evangelist

Paul Pallmeyer

Evangelism is far more than programmed activities designed to increase church membership rolls. It is the communication of a way of life that reflects the caring, forgiving love of Christ. It is inviting those who may not be experiencing this life to share in the company of those who are.

Here are a dozen and a half suggestions for congregations, and for those of us who belong to them, to express the gospel and/or invite others to join in sharing it. Which activities are employed is less important than that we care enough to do one or more of them in Christ's service. Any one of them can be happy and rewarding, requiring us only to be what we already are: people who know Jesus and his love.

**1 Start a new parents' group** to share mutual problems and solutions. Such a group can provide a nonthreatening entry point into your church community.

**2 Personally contact** one or more first-time visitors to your congregation—within a day or two of their visit. Tell them you were happy to see them and invite them to return.

**3 At your next worship** service, imagine yourself a stranger in your congregation. Then ask: What would I find strange or puzzling in this environment? Make a list of these and take steps to make it easier for a person who visits.

**4 Explore ways** to make it easier for members to invite others to your church. For starters, request a free copy of the latest issue of *The Evangelizing Congregation* by calling the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's Resource Information Service (RIS) at 1-800-638-3522.

**5 Spend some time** with an acquaintance (or even a stranger) who seems to have dropped out of church. Make a conscious effort to listen to the person. What are her or his hopes, dreams, hurts, concerns? If church attendance is mentioned, you should not be the one to bring it up. Your purpose at this point is to care for this member, not to get the person to church.

**6 A major cause** of church inactivity is loss of relationships within the congregation. Conduct an every-member visit involving as many callers as you can recruit. As much as possible, have them call on members they do *not* know very well. They are to ask the members to make no particular commitment or pledge, but they are simply to get to know them better, discover needs, and share hopes for the congregation.

**7 Order 100 copies** of the Augsburg Fortress leaflet *Why Join a Congregation?* (Order from your nearest Augsburg Fortress location or call 1-800-328-4648; code 23-9973, \$7.50 per 100.) Keep several leaflets in your purse or coat pocket. Leave two or three at each public place you visit—doctor's office, beauty salon, bus.

**8 Start a small group** in your home to discuss spiritual issues and invite nonchurched people as well as church members. Do not use this as a device to lure people to your church but as a way to foster good-faith dialog. You will have ample opportunity to witness to your good faith!

**9 If you are in a rural area**, contact your synod or regional resource center and arrange to view the video "Sharing the Story in Rural Communities," and view it with others in your congregation.

**10 Join** your congregation's evangelism committee, or offer your services to it, for one night per month for calling on active, inactive, or prospective members. Phone RIS (1-800-638-3522) for a free copy of the pamphlet *How to Make a Call* (the quantity available is limited).

**11 Offer transportation** to church to anyone you know who could use the lift.

**12 Look for areas of need** in your community. With one or more other members discuss what you and/or your congregation might do to address that need. *Example:* If there is need for a preschool or day-care center at your church, find two, three, or more parents of young children who might be interested in starting one and begin planning. Call 1-800-638-3522, ext. 2845 for assistance.



**13** After each service you attend, greet at least one person you don't recognize. To avoid mistaking a member you might be expected to know, say: "Good morning. My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I've been attending here for (years, months). How about you?"

**14** Order copies of the brochure *In Christ's Name, Welcome!* (Code 69-4917, 10¢ each) from the ELCA Distribution Service (1-800-328-4648). Go over the checklist with some church friends, noting areas for possible improvement in your congregation.

**15** Call one of the families or individuals who have recently joined your congregation or who have begun attending. Invite them to join you at a local function, or invite them to your home for a visit.

**16** When you have opportunity to lead a prayer or make a prayer request in your church service, Bible study, or fellowship group, include a petition for any in your community (including non-churched persons) who have special needs. Let them know later that you did this.

**17** Do you know a nonmember who has been attending your church for some time? Ask that person to join your congregation. Sometimes people are just waiting for an invitation. Even those who decline will be pleased that you cared enough to ask.

**18** The best evangelists are continually growing in their own faith life. Take at least a few minutes each day to read and meditate on a section of the Scriptures and to communicate with our Lord in prayer.

+ **Bonus idea.** See how evangelism ideas grow beyond what we expect! Take part in the Waiting Room Ministry program of Lutheran Woman Today in which a congregation orders extra copies of LWT as part of their group subscription and places them in doctor's waiting rooms, hospitals, beauty shops, food-pantry bags, etc. Call 1-800-328-4648, ext. 556 for more information on getting involved in the program.

+ What evangelism idea would you add? ■

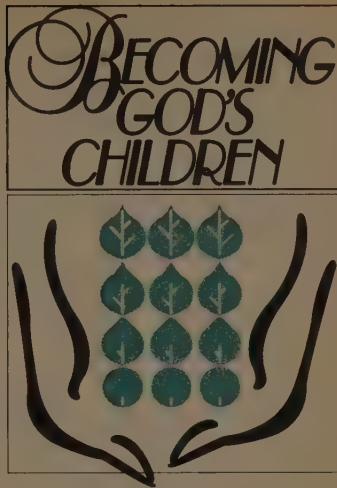
*Paul Pallmeyer, former missionary, pastor and editor, was the director for evangelism of the American Lutheran Church. Now in retirement, he serves the ELCA part-time as an evangelism specialist for resource development from his home in Lake Elmo, Minnesota.*

# Session 4

## Wise Stewards

Host: Jannine McCurley

Study text: Luke 16:1-9, 19-31



In Session 3 we looked at Jesus' sermon delivered in the synagogue of Nazareth, announcing that the time has arrived for good news to be proclaimed to the poor (Luke 4:16-21). Such concern for the poor is a main theme in Luke's gospel. The Gospel According to Luke presents more teachings, incidents, and parables about the poor than any other gospel.

When good news is declared for the poor, those of us who have never known poverty are left asking ourselves how we fit in to the picture. What role do we have in God's plan?

### Opening prayer

Gracious God, you open your hand and give us every good and perfect gift. Forgive the times we may forget this. Strengthen us to respond with gratitude by serving the poor and caring for those in deepest need. Give us ears to hear those who cry out in your name. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, we pray. Amen.



### Understanding the Word

The first part of Luke 16 is the parable of the dishonest steward; the second is that of the rich man and Lazarus. As you read these parables, ask yourself what their unique message to you might be.

The story of the steward introduces us to the term *stewardship*. It comes from the Greek word *oikonomia* (pronounced oy-ko-no-nee-ah), from which we get the word economy. Originally, economics referred to the management of a household. The one who performed such duties was called the steward, or manager.

## 1

*Another gospel, Matthew 25:34-46, gives us a clue about the "household" that God has entrusted to us. How would you describe that household?*



In Luke 16:1-9, the owner of the estate was probably an absentee landowner (much like those mentioned in Luke 12:42-47). At the time the gospel of Luke was written, the land of Palestine was under Roman control. It was common for investors to come from a distant region, purchase estates, hire managers to care for their investment, and return home.

The landowner in this parable learned that his manager was "wasting his goods," so he fired him (verses 1-2). The manager was devastated. He was also clever. He summoned those who owed his master for goods they had received, and discounted their debt (verses 5-7). It seems strange that the landowner then "commended" the manager for "his prudence" (verse 8).

Because we are not familiar with first-century business practices, it appears to us that the manager was cheating the landowner a second time and then being praised for it. This is a good illustration of the limitations of our contemporary eyes. We must first ask what the original readers of the text understood it to mean.

In Jesus' day, stewards or managers had full authority to rent or lend their master's property—even to charge exorbitant interest. What the manager in this parable deducted from each bill was his own profit. That sacrifice is the cleverness for which he was commended.

The steward returned to his master the benefit he had acquired from the master's property. By doing so, he acknowledged that the property was not his to possess, but rather his to manage.

The nature of his dishonesty is not explained, but it clearly is the "waste" referred to in verse 1, and not the rewriting of the bills. The steward was fired for wrongly using what was not his own and thereby breaking the trust that the master had put in him. The same Greek word for "waste" is used to describe both the steward's dishonesty in this parable, and the prodigal son's "squandering" of his father's money in Luke 15:13. In both parables, the money represents resources entrusted to us by God. The father in the story of the prodigal son, and the master in Luke 16:1-9, represent God.

The dishonest steward was able to return to God what belonged to God by relinquishing any claim to it. His "prudence" is



cognition of his own mortality. Instead of putting his trust in health, the steward returned to a trusting relationship with his master. On the day we die, money will fail; trust in God will give us an eternal home.

In verse 9, Jesus encourages his hearers to let go of their trust in "unrighteous mammon" which literally means "money that controls" and represents anything in which we put our trust. Therefore, we "cannot serve God and mammon" (verse 13) because God demands complete loyalty.

## 2

Consider verse 9. What do you think it might mean to "make friends by means of unrighteous mammon, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal habitations"?



Now read aloud the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 19:31. The first character to be introduced is an unidentified rich man who lived a splendid life. The second character is a "poor man named Lazarus, full of sores." The contrast between rich and poor is a common theme throughout Luke's gospel. (Check, for example, Luke 1:53 and 6:20, 24.)

The contrast in Luke 16:19-31 continues as Jesus tells of the deaths of the two men.

## 3

How do the deaths of the two men differ? How do their lives after death compare to their lives on earth? What happened to their families?



What the rich man can do is plead on behalf of his five brothers. He asks Abraham to send the poor man to them and warn them so they don't also end up separated from God. But Abraham simply tells him that they have all they need: "Moses and the prophets." "Moses" refers to the first five books of the Bible, known as the Torah, or the law. The Torah includes the instructions Moses received from God regarding the way Israelites are to treat the poor in their midst. Read, for example, Exodus 22:25-27 and 23:6, 11.

"The prophets" called by God to speak the word of the Lord to Israel were very concerned with the way the people of Israel treated the poor. See, for example, Isaiah 1:16-17, Ezekiel 16:49, and Amos 2:6-7.

Think about the possibility that "Moses and the prophets" could have taught the rich man and his brothers the prudence of giving to God what is God's.

## Interpreting the Word The Faces of Lazarus



What do the two parables we have studied tell us about stewardship? Start with the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. What would have made the rich man a good steward?

Put yourself in his position. Imagine walking by such a sight as the poor man full of sores, begging for food. Perhaps you live in a city or town where you don't need to use your imagination. The faces of Lazarus can be seen on the streets and in the doorways of communities in the richest country in the world.

The poor on our streets and the working poor who live as no human beings should have to live are the faces of Lazarus in our society. They are there for a variety of reasons. Some of them have no particular skills that would enable them to earn wages that could pay for rent, food and clothing. In some instances programs to train them have been eliminated. Some are victims of a racism that makes finding employment far more difficult for people of color and those whose native tongue is not English. Some are people who were productive in society, but who are victims of some event that has caused them to lose all they had. Some are emotionally unstable, or became that way by living on the streets.

## 4

*What types of homelessness, unemployment, and underemployment exist in the community where you live? What contact have you had with those who are in need? (Perhaps you might ask for the insights of someone in your community who works with homeless people and poor people.)*



The rich man in the parable had Moses and the prophets to guide him in compassion for the poor. As Christians we have the same guide. We also know the one who has risen from the dead (Luke

1). There can be no possible excuse for blindness toward the abuses in our midst.

Consider Luke 14:12-14. Look up the definition of "religion" in verses 1:27. Witness the benevolence of Christians for the poor Romans 15:25-27.

Humble, sacrificial giving is central to Christian stewardship. Contribute to the "economy" of God by sharing with others what we have been given.

## *Living the Word*

### Contemporary Stewards



In question 4 we tried to determine some of the reasons why people are poor and homeless in our society. As we begin to understand some of the causes of homelessness and poverty, it is important to consider ways in which the dignity of poor people might be restored. With your group, list some things that cause or contribute to poverty and homelessness. Then work to develop some "prudent" responses that focus on what you as individuals, a group, and a church can do, or are doing, to eliminate some of the causes of poverty and homelessness.

Is one of the problems a lack of occupational skills? What resources in your community could address that need? If none exist, what might you and your church do?

Is one of the problems mental illness? Or is the problem ignorance of what mental illness is, an ignorance that causes fear and irrational judgment? Could these destructive reactions be tempered by learning about, and even from, the mentally ill? Understanding can be the beginning of compassion.

Homelessness can arise because of a lack of affordable housing, because of alcoholism, drug abuse, and child or spouse abuse. How might we help people in these situations?

Financial giving is one important way to help. In addition, though, our own skills and energies can make life more humane for other people. Eliminating the causes of poverty in our midst where we can respond to our call to be prudent stewards of the resources God has put in our trust.

## Looking Ahead



In Session 5 we will look at the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). There, we will consider what it means to be involved in the stewardship of the humanity shared by people of differing backgrounds and beliefs. ■



# And You Took Me In

Dolores Klinsky Walker

Laura was sleeping so lightly that she was awakened by the hum of the air conditioner coming on. A floorboard creaked. Suddenly her eyes snapped wide open. Laura sensed, rather than heard, stealthy footsteps on the hall carpet. It couldn't be either of her daughters: when they got up at night, they were never quiet about it.

How could Don sleep so blissfully? *He* was the one who had misgivings in the first place. I'll deal with this myself, she thought. After all, she had taken in the girl over Don's protests. ("How do you know she's not on drugs?" Don had demanded when Laura already had her in the house. "A nice girl wouldn't be out on the streets with no place to go!")

The floor squeaked again. Laura held her breath, trying to place the sound. Evidently the visitor wasn't up just to use the bathroom.

Darkness set free the inner voice Laura had squelched earlier. (*You could have offered money to send her to a motel. But no, you had to bring her into your own home.*) Laura shifted uncomfortably on the bed.

She had stopped by the church that afternoon to drop off some papers. In the office Laura found herself waiting with a young girl, her arms full of a baby. She had come to live with her sister, she told the church secretary, but her sister had moved away. Seeing the church, she came in to ask if she might spend the night in a Sunday school room. The secretary explained that the church couldn't allow that; they had to beware of vandalism or theft, among other concerns.

Laura thought immediately of the empty couch in her sewing room. Before she really knew what was happening,

she left the church with the stranger and her baby in tow, wondering how she'd explain to Don.

Laura waylaid Don in the garage at suppertime. It took some fast talking, not to mention scripture quoting, but he finally agreed to the impulsive good deed.

Serena, as she called herself, blended into the household like a favorite babysitter. She talked to Tammy and Trish about school, and cautiously let the girls hold her baby. Watching them, Laura was convinced that she had done the right thing. Surely God had timed her arrival at the church! Perhaps Laura would lead Serena to Christ, and Laura's actions could alter the direction of two lives.

But when everyone was in bed and the house was ominously silent, Laura could not relax. She had hoped to speak to Serena of spiritual matters. But Serena, she found, wasn't easy to talk to. As they left the church, Serena had glanced back and shook her head. "To think I actually turned to a *church* for help! Granny would never believe it."

"Is your grandmother a Christian?" Laura asked.

Serena regarded Laura solemnly. "She was the most religious person I ever knew," she said matter-of-factly. "And the meanest." Laura had no idea what to say to that. Unfortunately, it turned out to be the only personal information Serena chose to divulge.

Now, hearing Serena's footsteps recede, Laura wondered if she'd put her purse away. Her eyes strained through the darkness until they traced the familiar shape on her dresser. Then with renewed alarm she remembered the car keys on the hook in the kitchen. Surely Serena wouldn't repay her kindness by stealing their car!

Laura heard a baby's cry, abruptly muffled. She propelled herself from the covers, toes digging for the slippers she kept at the side of her bed. At least I can stop her from taking the car, she told herself grimly. Laura jerked her robe from a closet hook and reached the kitchen before she finished tying the sash.

Serena was at the stove, but her attention was not on the car keys dangling a few inches from her face. She was clasping the baby against her, testing the temperature of a pan of milk with her finger. Serena turned in dismay at Laura's approach. "Oh, you woke up. I tried to keep him quiet."

*continued on next page*

"Oh, it . . . it wasn't the baby," Laura stammered. "I wasn't sleeping well. . . ." The whirl of the air conditioner cut off her words, and she noticed Serena's bare arm prickle. "Let me get you a robe to keep you warm," she offered, and disappeared into her bedroom.

Her hasty entrance woke Don, who sat up. "Trouble?"

Laura turned from rummaging in the dark closet. "No, dear, just a night feeding. Go back to sleep. I'm finding a robe for Serena." Don shook his head and buried himself back under the covers.

While Serena settled down in a chair to feed the baby, Laura warmed another pan of milk and sweetened it with honey. She filled two mugs and joined her guest at the kitchen table.

"This should relax us both," Laura said. Serena accepted the mug with a smile, but was no more communicative than she had been earlier. They sipped the milk in companionable silence.

Her apprehension ebbing, Laura reflected on the past few hours. She was glad she hadn't shuffled Serena off to a motel. Her thoughts turned to the Good Samaritan. Did he ask questions of the man he rescued? she wondered. ("Why did you take this road? Didn't you know it's full of thieves?") Did he worry that the injured man might take advantage of him, perhaps run up an excessive bill at the inn? Did he hope for thanks?

Serena burped her drowsy son and bade her hostess good-night. Laura automatically rinsed out the cups and padded back to her own bed.

Laura yawned. Maybe, she thought, she'd get a chance to witness in the morning. Or maybe she had already. Then again, maybe this would be a no-strings-attached act of kindness. But she would say, "Serena, God loves you," when it was time for Serena to go her mysterious and solitary way.

And maybe, for kindness shown, Serena would be inclined to believe it. ■

*Dolores Walker is a free-lance writer, wife and empty-nest mother. An active church member, she teaches composition and literature part-time at Walla Walla Community College at Washington State Penitentiary.*



## Brief Prayers on News Items

Sonia C. Groenewold

### ELCA men create LMM chapters

in more than half the ELCA  
ls are coming forward to begin  
ers of Lutheran Men in Mis-  
So far more than 4,400 men  
joined, said William Pollock,  
A Division for Congregational  
As they created their chapter,  
n the Florida Synod were urged  
o allow the image-makers in  
wood and on Madison Avenue  
tate their roles in society. Watch  
n article on LMM in the June  
issue of Lutheran Woman To-

ss the ministries and activities  
theran Men in Mission, O God.

### Lutheran pastors study dynamics of family violence

rogram operated by Lutheran  
ly Services (LFS) in the Caro-  
provided training for pastors in  
ng with family violence. Dr. Bill  
ham of LFS cited these statis-  
Every 15 seconds in America, a  
an is beaten by her spouse or  
ner. At least one million children  
e physically abused by parents or  
akers every year. At least one in  
lderly people is physically  
ed by adult children. Partici-  
s explored ways in which mis-  
pretations of Scripture contrib-  
to the dynamics of family  
nce.

God of Peace, enable us to live in  
ony.

### ◆ Sudanese face starvation

All Africa Press Service reported that the current famine in Sudan may be the worst in that country's 35-year postindependence history. Between 1984-1985, 150,000 Sudanese starved during a drought. In 1988, another 250,000 died in the wake of another drought and war-induced famine. Relief aid is frequently disrupted by government bombing of United Nations relief centers and relief flights.

*Help us find ways to share food and wealth, O God.*

### ◆ Millions of children work to survive

More than 200 million children throughout the world must work to survive, said a Lutheran World Information report by the children's relief organization, *Terre des Hommes*. More than 40 million children survive in Latin America by the collection of waste, casual labor and petty theft, said Jochen Menzel, organization chair.

*Nurturing and Loving Lord, enable us to see and care for the world's children as the gifts they truly are.*

Look for people and issues in the local, national and international news to add to your daily prayer list. ■

*Sonia C. Groenewold is news editor of The Lutheran.*

# Evangelization

James Capers  
David Wilder

A couple of years ago, we were headed north on Interstate 5 to Warm Beach Camp north of Seattle for a church leaders' conference. In the car with us was Dr. Kennon Callahan, a highly regarded church consultant and author of *Twelve Keys to an Effective Church*.

The conversation turned to our young, new church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Looking straight at us, Callahan said, "You realize there are four groups in this new Lutheran church, don't you?" He went on, "Yes, you have the three merging Lutheran denominations and then you have a very large, yet-to-be-invited group of people out in the culture, waiting for your invitation to share the life and mission of your church."

"You have a choice," he continued. "You could focus most of your attention on the three merging groups, in which case the ELCA will become another steady and declining mainline denomination. Or you could spend most of your time, resources and energy in witness to that large fourth group. If you do the latter, you will become the most exciting evangelical church in America."

That conversation is still in our minds as we think about our ministry and witness as members of the ELCA. Witness is what the church is all about. Our calling to Christ through faith and baptism is a calling to be witnesses, for the risen

Christ said to the first apostles: "You shall be my witnesses . . ." (Acts 1:8, Revised Standard Version).

Being Christ's witnesses can be understood in three distinct, though related, ways. We are called to be witnesses, that is, to live in our personal and congregational life, the ex-

We are  
called to be  
the witness,  
to do the  
witness,  
to say the  
witness.

perience of the love and grace of God. We are also called to *do* the witness, that is, to share the word through activities of love, mercy, justice and peacemaking. And we are called to *say* the witness, that is, to proclaim the gospel verbally. Saying the witness is to name the name of Jesus whom we serve.

Many Christians tend to misunderstand what it is to "say the witness." Some think it means following a predetermined order of steps in the presentation of the gospel. Others

of it as an argument or debate  
t the truth of the Christian  
Still others see it as simply  
ng one's faith. None of these  
fully gets at the heart of verbal  
amation, for saying the witness  
s out of being and doing the wit-  
Or as Darrell Guder writes in  
*By Witnesses* (Eerdmans, 1985),  
being and doing witness provide  
context and also the validation  
that we say."

the best word to describe the ac-  
of saying the witness, we think,  
the word *evangelization*. Though  
to many Lutherans, the word  
*evangelization* has certain advantag-  
er the more familiar term, *evan-  
m*. While there is no biblical  
l for *evangelism*, there are a host  
lated terms in the New Testa-  
t which we usually translate as  
pel" or "evangel." *Evangelize* is a  
meaning "to proclaim" the good  
with power. *Evangelization* is  
noun that names that activity.  
*Evangelism* is an "-ism" word, and  
y "-ism" words in our time de-  
ideologies that are hostile to the  
el or distort it, such as sexism,  
ism, commercialism and milita-  
n. *Evangelization* describes a  
ess and an activity capturing  
t the church actually does in say-

The best word  
to describe  
the activity  
of saying the  
witness is  
the word  
*evangelization*.

As we engage  
in the  
ministry of  
evangelization,  
we can be  
assured that  
we belong to  
the Lord.

ing the witness. It clearly should never  
be confused with any negative  
"-ism" word.

Adding a new word in our vocab-  
ulary will not, of course, make the  
compelling difference in our re-  
sponse to Kennon Callahan's chal-  
lenge. Being and doing the witness  
will make the crucial difference for  
saying the witness. Phillip Potter, an  
ecumenical leader, reminds evangel-  
izing churches to themselves receive  
the good news and let the Holy Spirit  
remake the life of the church.

As we engage in the ministry of  
evangelization, we can be assured  
that we belong to the Lord to whom  
we witness. It is by God's power that  
we proclaim the name of Jesus and  
we can be confident that "nothing  
. . . will ever be able to separate us  
from the love of God" (Romans 8:39,  
Today's English Version). ■

*The Rev. James M. Capers is the di-  
rector for evangelism/outreach of the  
ELCA Division for Congregational  
Life and the Rev. David E. Wilder is  
director for the Division for Congre-  
gational Life's evangelism ministries.  
Both have served as parish pastors  
and have an abiding interest in evan-  
gelization.*



# Line Up for Jesus!

Donna Hacker Smith

Two years ago my husband and I traveled to the Soviet Union. It was, to say the least, an enlightening experience! Our eyes were opened to an entirely different culture, as rich and diverse as one could imagine. While the four cities we visited in the USSR were familiar in many ways, something was absent from the city scene, and my eye kept searching for it. After a few days, I managed to pinpoint it: advertising. There were no billboards, no neon signs or storefront displays.

There was one surefire system for spotting a store, however: long lines of hopeful buyers marked the places where food, clothing and other goods might be available. Our Soviet guide, Lena, shared with us that it is a common practice of Soviet consumers to join a queue even without knowing what it is for.

Coming from a nation so generously blessed with supplies of life's necessities, it's hard to imagine waiting in line for an unidentified item! In the United States, it's difficult to get people to stand in line and be patient even when they know what they're waiting for!

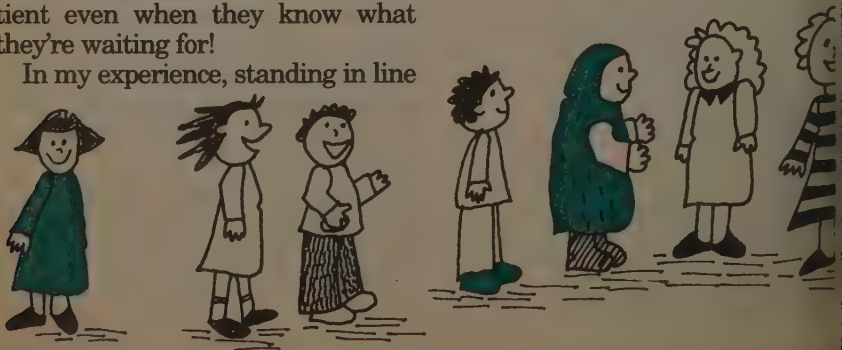
In my experience, standing in line

has more to do with one's psychological and spiritual needs. In our culture, we often queue up for whatever "line" leads to the current solution for life's ills.

Perhaps the line waits for the correct diet, or the latest way to "dress for success," or the newest parenting technique, or the trendiest stress-reducing meditation regimen. There is always something, or someone prepared to promise us an answer to our deepest needs. We wait in line, hoping to discover that it is the right line for us.

How well I recall the times I stood in the wrong line! And how well I recall those times when someone was able to show me that what I really needed was to be in another place!

As a youngster I found acceptance and social growth as a Girl Scout. Whatever misery I might have had in dealing with my peers at school was balanced out by the loyal friendship I found in Scouts. It was a good "line" to wait in! It seemed as if I had found



I would need for life and the  
e.  
w fortunate I was when some-  
recognized that it was time to  
to a new line. My Junior Girl  
leader invited me to try sing-  
the junior choir at the church  
e our troop met. From the choir  
I moved to the Sunday school  
and eventually to the worship  
"Each line led me to new learn-  
new growth, and a deeper sense  
fillment. Eventually I wound up  
ling in line to be baptized, then  
rmed, and later, ordained. All  
because one perceptive woman  
d to witness to a little girl, steer-  
er to the line labeled, "This way  
sus Christ."

s amazing that we are so easily  
ff by the idea of sharing faith as  
riend did. We easily recommend  
products to our friends, suggest  
best stores and health clubs,  
recipes and recommend styles  
othing. I am more than willing  
fend to any person the choices I  
e in hair-care products, house  
t, or floor wax. Why, then, when  
r Christ's command to share the  
and make disciples, am I defen-  
and hesitant? I know that the  
news of God's love is for all peo-  
et I often feel it is someone else's  
o announce it.

my mind, I can still see the stol-

id, patiently expressionless faces of  
the people waiting in line in the  
USSR, hoping that a loaf of bread or  
a pair of shoes awaited them. And in  
my heart, I see all the people around  
me who are standing in line for  
something indefinable, something  
that will give them renewed life, en-  
ergy, and hope. What a blessing it is  
to be able to share with them the di-  
rections to the one line where the  
"too-good-to-be-true" promises can  
be believed, and where the promises  
come with an eternal lifetime guar-  
antee! And there's more good news—  
once we've found Jesus, we needn't  
stand in another line again. Pass on  
that good news! ■

*The Rev. Donna Hacker Smith is  
pastor, Prince of  
Peace Lutheran  
Church in Free-  
port, Illinois. She  
enjoys reading,  
needlework and  
cheering for the  
Chicago Cubs.*

*Donna Hacker  
Smith and Karen  
Melang alternate  
writing "Give Us This Day."*



# REVIEWS



## **Dreams: God's Forgotten Language**

by John A. Sanford

(Harper and Row, 1989; \$10.95).

Many years of pastoral counseling, study of dream therapy, and work with Jungian psychology have led the author, an Episcopal priest, to suggest that God speaks to us through dreams.

The first part of the book deals with specific cases, and the ways in which interpretations of the dreams helped the people involved. Sanford stresses that dreams are trying to tell us something, either about ourselves, or about situations of which we are a part. Because dreams use symbols, they are difficult to interpret; because they come from the unconscious part of ourselves, most are disregarded.

The second part of the book discusses dreams as they are related to the Bible. Dreams, revelations, and visions are the basis for much of what is written in the Bible; and dreams were believed in biblical times to be the voice of God speaking to people. Sanford believes the same is true today, but fear keeps us from recognizing the word of God coming to us.

Whether or not the reader can relate what is written in this book to personal dreams, the book does make interesting reading. It is exciting—and a little frightening—to think that God may be speaking to us through our jumbled nighttime travels.

*DeEtte F.  
Evansville, Minnes*



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### **Write Psalms**

John Stott

Word Press, 1988; \$14.95).

is an exceptional volume with  
ring comments, explanations  
historical data on the Psalms. A  
ter is devoted to each of the 38  
ns selected. The book is filled  
large, full-color photos of the  
Land.

the evangelist-author directed  
London Institute for Contempo-  
Christianity and has written  
tal books, including the best-  
*Basic Christianity*.

Whether you are a casual Scrip-  
tural reader or an expert, here is a  
informative and beautiful re-  
ce. Read it and sing a new  
n!

*Gloria Gerhold  
Lancaster, Ohio*

prevailing view of spirituality, which  
centered on isolation and external  
forms of contrition, toward an em-  
phasis on internal penance and ac-  
ceptance of God's grace.

Julian was a woman ahead of her  
time: in her "uneasy alliance" with  
some of the practices of the church to  
which she had declared lifelong loy-  
alty; in her view of sin and suffering;  
in her insistence that all people have  
an essential relatedness to God; and  
in her development of the theme of  
the motherhood of God.

This book is not light reading, but  
I found it compelling and well worth  
the effort. Jantzen's careful study of  
Julian's writings uncovers the "good  
sense and theological insight . . .  
(that) speak to our own concerns and  
offer guidance for our own spiritual  
growth."

*Renee Hermanson  
San Antonio, Texas*

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### **Julian of Norwich:**

### **Mystic and Theologian**

Trace M. Jantzen

Westminster Press, 1988; \$9.95).

Trace Jantzen traces some hefty the-  
ological issues through the writings  
of a medieval woman known as Ju-  
lian of Norwich. In probing Julian's  
theology, Jantzen uncovers a person  
of great charm, intelligence and in-  
tegrity.

Julian lived from the late 14th  
century into the 15th, the twilight of  
the Middle Ages and a time rife with  
political and religious upheavals and  
plagues. Through her life  
and writings, Julian influenced the

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### **God's Simple Gift: Meditations on Friendship and Spirituality**

by Diane Cooksey Kessler

(Judson Press, 1988; \$6.95).

The book is a collection of sermons  
by the author, a United Church of  
Christ minister. Each one covers a  
different aspect of friendship—in-  
cluding love, forgiveness, humor,  
play, conflict, loss and spiritual com-  
panionship—as outgrowths of our  
relationship with God.

The Reverend Kessler then moves  
on to the application of these quali-  
ties in our relations with people in  
our families, our neighborhoods and  
our global community. Finally, she  
calls us to understand God more ful-  
ly as our divine Friend.

The meditations have intriguing  
titles like "What's Your Theme

Song?" "Word Wars," "Slinking Toward Jerusalem" and "The Friendly Face of God." Each one ends with a brief prayer, and there are questions in the back of the book for group discussion.

Mildred E. Hluchy  
Hagerstown, Maryland

### **The Dance of Anger**

by Harriet G. Lerner

(Harper and Row, 1989; \$10.95).

Subtitled "A Woman's Guide to Changing the Patterns of Intimate Relationships," this absorbing book explores the sources of anger in women and offers constructive ways of dealing with that anger.

Dr. Lerner sympathetically demonstrates how our roles as parent, child, daughter, and friend are influenced first by our family of origin and second by a culture that tries to make us believe that "nice girls don't get angry." She encourages us to recognize that hidden angers can sabotage our relationships, causing us to get "stuck" in a dance that goes nowhere.

This book is a challenging tool for group study.

Kay M. Hollinger  
Royersford, Pennsylvania

### **Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth**

by Richard J. Foster

(Harper and Row, 1988; \$16.95).

This is a very exciting book for anyone who is interested in a deeper, closer walk with Jesus. The author describes the *inward* and *outward* disciplines of life in parts I and II, including brief essays on meditation, prayer, fasting, study, simplicity, solitude, submission and service.

Part III of the book focuses on the *corporate* disciplines of confession, worship, guidance and celebration. We are challenged to "press on" toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:14, Revised Standard Version).

The author includes names of many other books to further our growth. I enjoyed the scripture references and personal notes the author added. This is an excellent book for personal study or for small discussion groups.

Shirley Gustafson  
Woodville, Wisconsin

*Unless otherwise noted, books viewed in LWT can be obtained through your local library or bookstore, or by contacting your nearest Augsburg Fortress location.*

# Hope for

## A Parable

Mark A. Olson

women, a committee of Women  
Glimpse of God Lutheran Church,  
to write an article for their  
newsletter. Each shares her  
for their ministry together.

Pat seeks experience that en-  
riches her spiritual growth and  
draws her out of the world and its prob-

Pat says that her involvement  
Women of Glimpse of God Luther-  
an Church—the circle meetings, fel-

lowship and Bible study—makes her  
belong. Mary speaks of ser-  
vice and support of the women's shelter,

involvement in literacy efforts, mak-  
ing quilts for Lutheran World Relief.

As she listens, Sarah thinks back  
to a discussion that took place at the

church council which echoed many of  
the same thoughts and feelings.

She longed for a congregation that  
would call them out of the world and

into a relationship with Jesus. Others  
wanted a community to belong  
to. Still others wanted a vehicle to  
make the world a better place. Sarah  
was reminded of the vision for  
Glimpse of God Lutheran Church  
that the council had agreed upon:  
*The mission of this congregation is to  
bear witness to the reign of God, in  
all that is done, for the sake of the  
world.*

The four women shape their arti-  
cle about Women of Glimpse of God  
Lutheran Church to reflect their  
mission and the mission of the con-  
gregation. When they finish, they re-  
alize that they have come up with a  
“theology of evangelism” as the min-  
istry of Women of Glimpse of God Lu-  
theran Church.

Their article reads like this:

**What is the ministry of Women of Glimpse of God Lutheran Church?** The Women of Glimpse of God Lutheran Church bear witness to God's reign in the world through participating fully in the life of the congregation.

More specifically, we, the Women of Glimpse of God Lutheran Church, reflect the larger community by calling its participants to a faithful life shaped around three dynamics:

1) We, the Women of Glimpse of God Lutheran Church, are a people called to praise and worship. We acknowledge that all life



is a gracious gift from God. What we have and are is not a result of our own efforts. Because God is the giver, we seek our sanctuary and refuge in God and respond to God's gifts to us, the undeserving, with a life of praise and worship.

2) We, the Women of Glimpse of God Lutheran Church, are also a people of righteousness. We live out our calling as people of praise in all that we plan and do together. We are aware that the practice of our life together announces what we believe.

3) We, the Women of Glimpse of God Lutheran Church, are a community of compassion. We are open to—and invite into the community—the stranger, the outsider, the forgotten. When our life of praise leaves people out, it is unfaithful. When our organization, care and education do not challenge our life together, it is unfaithful. To be faithful means that we are a people of compassion who reach out to, and love, those who are not part of the community—through invitation, service and advocacy. This reaching out is focused especially on those often silenced and forgotten: the poor, the victimized, the oppressed (Matthew 25). We are committed to making a difference in this world.

We, the Women of Glimpse of God Lutheran Church, bear witness to the reign of God by being a people of praise, righteousness and compassion. The ministry of Women of Glimpse of God Lutheran Church is to live out this witness.

At the close of the meeting the four women join in prayer. Each offers a petition of thanksgiving:

*Lord, thank you for your Son Jesus, who is all hope, life, and peace. Grant that we might know Christ's constant love in all our lives.*

*Lord, thank you for this gathering of women who care for one another and help each other make it through life. Grant that we might hold each other together.*

*Lord, thank you for opening us to the hurt and wounded of the world. Give us courage to reach out in service and advocacy so that we might make a difference in this world.*

*Lord, thank you for calling us to be a faithful community of praise, righteousness and compassion. Give us strength to live out these three dynamics of faith. Amen. ■*

The Rev. Mark A. Olson is assistant to the bishop, Rocky Mountain Synod, and evangelism staff, Division for Congregational Life, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

# Women of the ELCA Purpose Statement

As a community of women  
created in the image of God,  
called to discipleship in Jesus Christ, and  
empowered by the Holy Spirit,  
We commit ourselves to  
grow in faith,  
affirm our gifts,  
support one another in our callings,  
engage in ministry and action, and  
promote healing and wholeness  
in the church, the society,  
and the world.

# Revitalization Begins with You



Jeanne Rapp

"How can we get younger women involved?" This question has been asked by many women's organizations and reflects a need for new approaches that address the needs of *all* women. Revitalization can happen—and it can begin with you!

In 1871 a small group of women began meeting at St. Paul Lutheran Church for the purpose of sewing mission projects. Minutes of this early society reveal stories of mission-minded women who carried their shoes and socks as they waded swollen streams to participate in the mission projects of the *Kvindeforening*, the ladies' aid society.

Today, 120 years later, women are still mission-minded and committed to the gospel of Jesus Christ. But the world has changed significantly, the mission has become broader, and women today face a myriad of choices about how best to use their gifts and commit their time.

The past several decades suggest that women's organizations have not faced very well the issue of how to attract new members. In the past, newcomers came to women's organizations because of family, institutional or denominational loyalties. But these loyalties are no longer automatic. Today churches and organizations are confronted with having

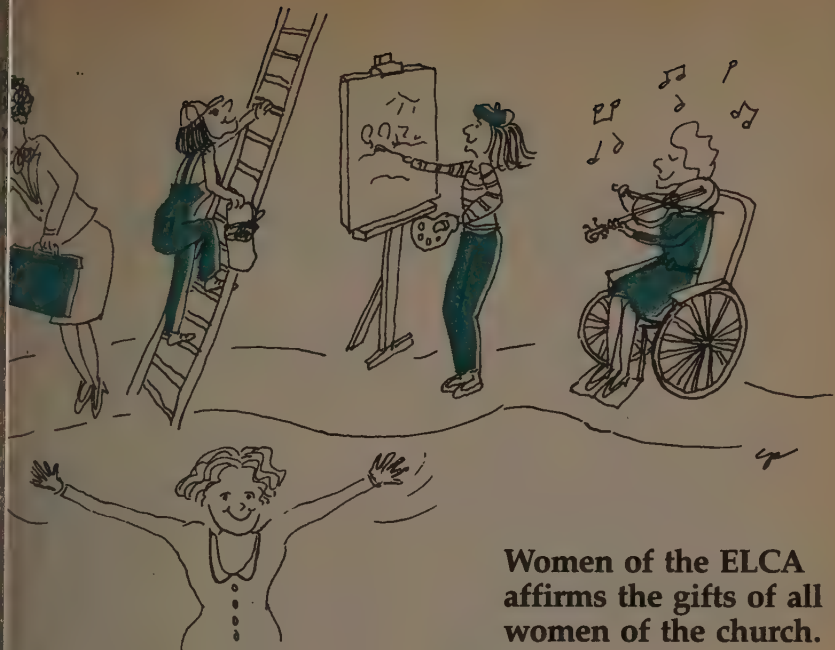
to earn loyalty.

Once we have accepted this truth we can begin to revitalize our women's organizations and its congregational units. Let's begin by analyzing 1) the *identity* of the women of the church and their *expectations*, 2) the *traditions* versus *needs*, and 3) the *purpose* and *program*.

Identifying who the women of the church are will provide statistics that tell a story of people. The statistics will likely show a diverse group of women with a variety of needs and a wealth of gifts. This analysis calls the organization to recognize and affirm differences among the group. Then the organization needs to look at what the expectations of the women are before deciding to undertake new approaches. The varied expectations and needs of women may call for a program of many focuses, instead of just one, in order to reach more women.

"But-we-have-always-done-this-way!" thinking most like needs to be examined. When traditions prove to be barriers to newcomers, there must be a willingness to change. Ask yourself, as your group: "Are the present purposes and goals of your congregational unit still valid? Do the spiritual, social and service elements of your





## Women of the ELCA affirms the gifts of all women of the church.

men's group all receive appropriate attention—or does one area dominate to the detriment of the organization? What do you want to see open during the next years to make your organization stronger and more vital?"

According to Lyle E. Schaller, author of *44 Ways to Revitalize the Women's Organization* (Abingdon, 1980), from which some of the ideas in this article are taken, the most effective single approach to revitalizing a women's organization probably is to find a committed, skilled, creative new leader willing to commit to the leadership task for the next several years. That's no small challenge! Another option may be to recruit women of varying ages and experiences to positions of leadership. Attracting newcomers, though, is not enough. There *must* also be a general ongoing commitment of support and willingness to explore new opportunities.

People today expect—and deserve—choices! Why not try shaping a series of appealing, new and different

ways to help women become involved? The purpose statement of Women of the ELCA (see p. 41) affirms a broad range of possibilities in ministry to include the gifts of all women of the church. The creativity to come up with some fresh ideas already exists in the women in your group. And the Spirit, the giver of all gifts, stands ready to empower us.

Those who love the women's organization as it is can also love it enough to encourage its revitalization. Those who do not feel the organization meets their needs can seize the opportunity to help shape the "what is" into a "what can be."

Be the risk-taker. Accept the challenge. You do possess the ability to change, to explore the new, to be receptive to the spiritual needs of all God's people. Revitalization does begin with you. ■

*Jeanne Rapp, Pontiac, Illinois, is a past president and current member of the Women of the ELCA church-wide board.*

## MISSION:

# Growth

## How Are You Relating Today?

**H**ow is it that given a world of instant communication and almost-instant travel, we are so often lonely? How can it be that during a day in which we encounter dozens of people, we can miss actually relating to anyone?

God's plan for us includes being in a personal relationship with one another in the same manner as we have been reconciled to God. As heirs to the kingdom, we are God's messengers in a broken world. As ambassadors for Christ, we are to deliver a message of reconciliation to others.

Developing and nurturing relationships is not a simple or automatic process. There is not an accelerated approach for friendship. Think about a person who has greatly influenced your life. What was the nature of your relationship? Is it a comfort to think about him or her? What makes that person so important to you? Do others see you as an important influence on their life?

Women of the ELCA has a new resource that lifts up personal witness and relationships. "Gifted . . . to Listen: An Evangelism Tool" is a one- or two-day retreat on listening and its importance to evangelism and witness. (See "Listen First," on page 10.) Order from Augsburg Fortress (code 2-9062, \$1.50).

Today many are concerned with family relationships. Women of the ELCA shares that concern. It is important that we look at the spiritual welfare of those who make up our family. Women of the ELCA is developing a resource to help women become better at sharing their faith stories with family members. This resource, part of the upcoming Program Idea Book, will be available in late summer of 1991.

**S**haring the good news in a "particular place" is also a concern for women. A program will help develop an effective witness in rural communities will be a part of the same Program Idea Book.

Think about the people you have countered today. How did you relate? What was your witness?

*Valora Starr  
Director for  
Evangelism  
and Witness*



## MISSION:

# Community

## Women of the ELCA: An Evangelism Team

Christ Church, like so many other congregations in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, is getting smaller. It has been eight years since the number of new members has equaled the number of members who have died, left, or become inactive. Longtime members of Christ Church are worried. What are we doing about it? Is it *us*?

Life today is busier than ever. People have so many options, so many ways to spend their time that sometimes it seems that the church can't compete. Many congregations have found that small groups with clear purposes are the best way to reach out to new people and to the uninvited.

This is why Dr. Lyle Schaller, one of today's foremost authorities on church planning, says in *44 Ways to Revitalize the Women's Organization* (London Press, 1990) that "the women's organization is often the church's number-one evangelistic team." (See "Revitalization Begins with You," p. 42.)

Women's organizations in the church encourage adults to take part in a serious study of the Bible and are persistent advocates for mission. Often women's organizations are the most sensitive of all our church groups to social-action and

issue-centered ministries. The women's organization organizes to respond to Christ's command to feed the hungry, to visit those in prison, to clothe the naked, and to comfort the lonely. The women's organization challenges both women and men to be faithful in their witness, to be obedient to the call of the Lord, and to be sensitive to the needs of others.

Who wouldn't want to be a part of an organization that is so active? Who wouldn't want to be a part of a group of friends who do so much good? All it takes is women who enthusiastically talk about their church's women's group. All it takes is women who will bring friends, relatives, and work associates to the meetings, and your church not only will have an active, growing women's organization. Your church will be an active, growing congregation.

*Kwang-Ja Yu  
Director for  
Ecumenical  
and Cross-  
Cultural  
Programming*





## MISSION:

# Action

## Witnessing with Lutheran World Relief

In rural India, Drs. Raj and Mabelle Arole are training local women as health workers to assist in eradicating tuberculosis in 80 villages.

Forty village women in Mali are enhancing their vitamin-deficient diet through improved vegetable and fruit production.

Women from make-shift slum communities in Peru are becoming empowered through leadership training in a community women's organization.

In Honduras, literacy centers and women's health and legal groups are part of a new program developed by and for women.

These projects, which received grants from the 1990 Women of the ELCA First Triennial Convention offering, are examples of what can happen when the women of our church join forces with Lutheran World Relief.

### The Work of Lutheran World Relief

Lutheran World Relief (LWR) is funded cooperatively by Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod hunger funds to support global relief and development activities. Established in 1945 to coordinate relief efforts in the aftermath of World War

II, LWR soon realized that the church could also play a significant role in promoting human development and self-sufficiency. During the past year LWR supported over 100 projects, with the main emphasis on long-term, sustainable development.

### How We Can Respond

Historically, Women of the ELCA and its predecessor organizations have been among the strongest supporters of LWR. In addition to providing financial support through the ELCA World Hunger Appeal (Women of the ELCA Designated Program #555), we can also respond with donations of material: school uniforms; health, sewing, and school kits; soap collections; quilts.

During 1991 LWR especially needs the following:

■ Light-to-medium-weight clothing for men and children only. Worn clothing, except for sweaters, is useful, because in countries where the need is greatest, women tend to wear their own traditional clothing. Please do not send shoes, hats, gloves, scarves, or heavy winter clothing.

- School kits.
- Health kits.

tional needs include:  
chool uniforms. These materials  
re-cut for sewing.  
ieces of fabric. LWR will accept  
three yards up to a whole bolt  
ven cotton or synthetic blends.  
nits, please.

ankets and quilts. Quilts should  
pproximately 60 by 80 inches in  
and about 3 to 4 pounds in  
ht, of any fabric except fiber-  
s.  
ewing kits.  
ap.

ing the past year the outpouring  
yettes has been so generous that  
R has plenty to meet the current  
ls; however, local projects such  
omestic-abuse shelters and cen-  
for homeless people may also be  
ghted to receive layettes, as well  
ome of the other kits.

## information

ow to assemble these LWR par-  
projects, write:  
olvement, LWR Brochures  
ov, MN 55704.  
more general information about  
heran World Relief, write or call:  
Park Ave. South  
y York, NY 10016  
) 532-6350

## packing and sending Your donations

t and label your donations ac-  
cording to kind, and pack them in  
ng cartons secured with packing  
e—not to exceed 40 pounds in  
ght. Include the name and return  
ress of your church on each box  
l address it to the LWR ware-  
se nearest you:

Lutheran World Relief,  
1901 Fifth Street SE,  
Minneapolis, MN 55414 or  
Lutheran World Relief,  
500 Main Street, PO Box 188,  
New Windsor, MD 21176.

## Donations may be sent by:

**parcel post** (with a size limit of 72 inches—length and girth combined),  
**motor freight** (UPS, Greyhound and the like), or **trucking firms**.  
Some trucking firms may take your cargo free if the truck going past the warehouse city has empty space. A few may transport goods without cost or at reduced rates.

Before sending your donations, check with your Synodical Women's Organization president to see if there are already organized shipping efforts in your synod.

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## "FLYING QUILTS" VIDEO AVAILABLE

"Flying Quilts," a VHS video, demonstrates how quilts and other LWR Parish Projects are made, collected, shipped overseas, and used by needy people around the world. It is available on a free-loan basis from your Synodical Women's Organization president, or by calling Lutheran Visuals, 1-800-527-3211.

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*Doris Strieter  
Director for  
Service and  
Development*



# Hearing God

Albert Starr

**D**orothy Hemby celebrated the gift of having her faith in God come alive during one of the church's adult retreats. Even as Dorothy was experiencing the new birth of her faith, she was already in the early stages of wrestling with the cancer that would eventually claim her earthly life.

As her pastor and friend, I heard Dorothy talk of her joy in being able to "hear God" speaking in her life. She saw her new gift of faith as God's way of equipping her for the ordeal that lay ahead. Dorothy had experienced the pains of cancer before and spoke openly about the value of faith as a sustaining force in her life now.

Dorothy worked for several years as secretary of our church and school. Seeing her every day, I knew there were many times when she was in great pain. Often we would pray together there in the office, and even when the pain itself would not subside, her "spiritual peace" would seem to be restored.

Before she died, Dorothy went back to Iowa to stay with one of her daughters and family. In a phone conversation with Dorothy she told me that she was becoming somewhat afraid because the "noise" seemed to be growing louder everyday. Dorothy had described her pain as being a kind of noise—sometimes roaring, sometimes low and droning, but always distracting. I knew that her fear was that somehow amidst all the noise of her pain she would become unable to "hear God" when she needed to most. She needed to have God guide her through the confusion caused by her pain.

A few of us at the church prayed, and within a few days I was with Dorothy at her daughter's home. When I arrived, it gave her family opportunity to leave for a bit. Dorothy and I were alone. We spoke of many things, but soon she was telling me how much she missed singing in church. Her remembering soon gave way to singing, soft and low. We sang together simple songs of thanksgiving and praise to God, one s

**Dorothy spoke often of her joy in being able to "hear God" speaking in her life.**



ing to another. Every song seemed to bring another gift of renewed joy. We sang and prayed and remembered and laughed and cried.

Now there was no room in her heart for the noise or the fear. It was being forced out by the sound of her singing and praying, and by her words of thanksgiving for all God's blessings in her life. I still thank her for those several hours that afternoon. Dorothy came home with a blessing: "Thank you for coming for me—it's all right now."

Dorothy allowed me the privilege of seeing how God's sustaining grace stills the noise of pain and suffering. She did not hide her pain from me, but she invited me to see it and to witness her need to "see and hear" beyond it.

Dorothy's gift to me has been the sustaining truth about pain and suffering—whether in body, mind or spirit—always seek to trap us in the noise of chaos and confusion. But God's greater mercy and compassion find ways of "speaking" in the midst of our sufferings. Jesus Christ still speaks the "peace; be still" that we all need to hear in our lives.

I thank God for Dorothy and others like her who have taught me so much through their pain. In them I have been blessed to see the face of our living God, who heals the brokenness of our world with a word that brings life. Thanks be to God. ■

*The Rev. Albert Starr is pastor of Ascension Lutheran Church, Los Angeles, California.*

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Go therefore and  
make disciples of all  
nations, baptizing  
them in the name of  
the Father and of the  
Son and of the Holy  
Spirit.

*Matthew 28.*

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